

Work / Life

Get
Your "But"
Out of the Way!

Highlights

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NAVIGATOR

MANAGEMENT TIP

How to Avoid Discounting Your Own Accomplishments.

So, I'm having this great conversation with one of my best friends and colleagues, Bill Bastian. We hadn't seen each other in a couple of months because our schedules were a bit crazy, but here we were—finally—settled down on his sofa in his apartment in San Francisco having tea and the opportunity to get caught up.

Bill starts telling me about an event he had just completed for a client. Bill creates "fire walk" experiences for corporate folks (www.sparksdevelopment.com), and the previous weekend he did a program for a repeat client that went even better than he could have ever imagined. In a word, despite the conference having several other better-known—even "world-class"—speakers, his event was rated the highest. They absolutely loved him and his program.

Like many of us in the speaking and the meetings and conference industries, Bill's business took a significant downturn after the combined impacts of 9/11 and the implosion of the local dot.com economy. (If training and development are the first to go during an organizational financial crisis, you can just imagine where that puts things like fire walks.) Before then, Bill had almost achieved world-class status himself, having been asked to produce the fire walk segment for the television show "Survivor" during its first season.

"Wow! That's fantastic!" was the only thing I could say, because, well, it really was fantastic. "It's likely to lead to more work, I'll bet," I added.

"Well, normally, I'd like to think so, BUT . . ." and then Bill started a list of reasons as to why in this particular instance it probably wasn't going to lead to any additional work.

We talked on, and the conversation turned to Bill's more immediate endeavor, one that has taken him back to school to develop a different career for the long term. He again shared some great news. I acknowledged it, and—as is my normal habit—I extrapolated to some not-too-much-of-a-stretch wonderful thing that could happen as a result.

"Maybe, BUT . . ." And again, Bill told me why that wasn't likely.

I think we may have gone on along these lines two or three times before I said the words that suddenly popped into my head: "Bill, you really need to get your 'BUT' out of the way!"

At first we were both startled into silence by the familiar phrase with its revised meaning, and then we both started to laugh uncontrollably. What followed was a somewhat serious discussion about how each of us gets in our own way by arguing either for our own limitations or for limitations on the good that could come to us from somewhere else.

This was familiar territory to me because I have this same tendency, although for

whatever reason that particular day it was a lot easier to see it manifesting itself in Bill's conversation than it normally is to see it in my own. But I have a group of loyal and committed friends—including Bill—who catch me when I'm doing the same thing.

And we all do it. Seriously, we do. Something spectacular happens to us or is done by us, and the first thing we do is discount it. Why that is, I'll never know, and I'm not interested in investing the time and money in the therapy sessions that might be needed to find out. For me, it's enough to recognize it and make an effort to stop it.

And stopping it is important—indeed, it's imperative. Don't fool yourself into thinking that it's not. Each of us—you, me, him, her, each of us—creates the "reality" we experience directly from our thoughts. ("If you want to change your life, change your thoughts.")

Management Tips

Every one of us has the automatic "but" mechanism. As I said elsewhere, I haven't got any idea where this comes from—maybe it's in our genes—but I think it's unlikely that understanding where it comes from will help us in our progress to rid ourselves of it and its impact.

There are things you can do, however, that can be extremely useful in helping you get your "but" out of the way of your own life and your success.

Here are a few ideas that you can implement for yourself and for your work team:

• **Watch Your “But.”** The first step to change—any change—is awareness. You can actually program yourself to start noticing how often you stick your “but” in the way. Tell yourself to start listening for it, and you’ll be amazed at how frequently you find it part of your standard language usage. “Buts” particularly like to hang out around your scenes of success, seeming good fortune, and compliments. Just start noticing how often you engage in “but” behavior—I think you’ll be surprised.

• **Give Others Permission to Watch Your “But.”** Along the same lines, give others whom you trust permission to watch your “but.” Bill and I are so close and so committed to each other’s spiritual and personal growth that it was only natural for me to say something to him when I noticed it—indeed, it was almost unconscious; as it would be for him with me. Find those people in your life who can do the same thing for you. If you don’t have someone like that, then make it a top priority to create someone like that. Each of us needs at least one person in life who is watching our back, and—as part of that commitment—watching what language we are using, because that is a huge cue to what thoughts we are holding. And, remember, we create our life experience directly from those thoughts.

• **Talk About It at Work.** In your management meetings, start the “but” conversation. Begin by speaking from your own experience and share some of your own personal stories about how you’ve noticed your own mind works. The deeper you share from your own experience, the more the door will open for the folks in your organization to share from theirs. See if your team members are willing to support you—and each other—in catching “but” thinking, and in looking at how we denigrate or even sabotage our successes with our “buts.” You can even develop a ritual around “buts” by starting off your staff meetings by having everyone quickly share his or her best “but” story of the week. (“Can you believe it, after that magnificent thing happened, I immediately thought, ‘but’ . . .”)

• **Have Fun with It.** The easiest way to dissipate “but” thinking is to keep it light, make fun of it (and ourselves), and laugh about it. When someone gets caught with their “but” showing, extrapolate it to the ridiculous. Without too much leaping, it’s possible to go from a seemingly minor negative thought to the total destruction of the planet! It can actually be fun, and it changes the dynamics around the topic. See if your team is willing to keep track of the best “but” stories. Then, later in time,

see what actually happened. You can even give away an occasional “It-Didn’t-Happen-That-Way-At-All” Award for the best “but” that didn’t actually happen. This, too, can go a long way to dissipating “but” thinking.

(Source: Ric Giardina, J.D., nationally known speaker. www.spiritemployed.com)

INSPIRATION

A Work of Art

Edward Fischer writes in *Notre Dame Magazine* (February, 1983), that a leper (or, more correctly, a sufferer of Hansen’s Disease) in Fiji followed the leading of his twisted hands. He became an internationally known artist. “My sickness I see as a gift of God leading me to my life’s work,” he said. “If it had not been for my sickness, none of these things would have happened.”

As a young girl, Jessamyn West had tuberculosis. She was so sick that she was sent away to die. During that time she developed her skill as a writer and authored numerous novels in her lifetime.

The great author Flannery O’Connor suffered numerous ailments—lupus struck her at age 25 and she walked only with the aid of crutches for the final 14 years of her life. She noted, however, that this illness narrowed her activities in such a way that she had time for the real work of her life, which was writing.

Some people succeed in spite of handicaps. Others succeed because of them. The truth is, our problems help to make us what we are. Those who suffer often learn the value of compassion. Those who struggle often learn perseverance. And those who fall down often teach others how to rise again. Our troubles can shape us in ways a carefree existence cannot.

A story is told of an Eastern village that, through the centuries, was known for its exquisite pottery. Especially striking were its urns; high as tables, wide as chairs, they were admired around the globe for their strong form and delicate beauty.

Legend has it that when each urn was apparently finished, there was one final step. The artist broke it—and then put it back together with gold filigree.

An ordinary urn was then transformed into a priceless work of art. What seemed finished wasn’t, until it was broken.

So it is with people! Broken by hardships, disappointments, and tragedy, they can become disappointed and bitter. But when mended by a hand of infinite patience and

love, the finished product will be a work of exquisite beauty and effectiveness; a life that could only reach its wholeness after it was broken.

If you feel broken, remember that you are a work of art! And you may not actually be complete until the pieces are reassembled and bonded with a golden filigree of love.

(Source: Steve Goodier, author, publisher, columnist, speaker)

HUMOR

These Are Real Notes Written By Parents (Spellings have been left intact)



– My son is under a doctor’s care and should not take PE today. Please execute him.

– Please exkuce Lisa for being absent she was sick and I had her shot.

– Dear School: Please ecsc’s John being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and also 33.

– Please excuse Roland from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday he fell out of a tree and misplaced his hip.

– John has been absent because he had two teeth taken out of his face.

– Megan could not come to school today because she has been bothered by very close veins.

– Chris will not be in school cus he has an acre in his side.

– Please excuse Ray Friday from school. He has very loose vowels.

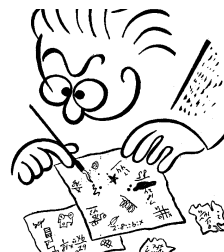
– Please excuse Tommy for being absent yesterday. He had diarrhea, and his boots leak.

– Please excuse Jimmy for being. It was his father’s fault.

– I kept Billie home because she had to go Christmas shopping because I don’t know what size she wear.

– Please excuse Jennifer for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday. We thought it was Sunday.

– Sally won’t be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.



HEALTH TIP

Tea: Nature's Secret for Sleep, Health, Mood, and Weight

Why has tea been known as medicine to the Chinese for the last 5,000 years? Perhaps because they have been aware of its effects on body chemistry—tea can relax, rejuvenate, enhance the ability to think, and change mood.

All regular (read: nonherbal) teas come from the same plant (in Latin it's called *camellia sinensis*) with the difference being in the processing. **White tea** is tea made from new growth buds and young leaves that have been steamed or fired to inactivate polyphenol oxidation, and then dried. **Green tea**, the first tender leaves of spring, are picked, rolled, steamed, crushed, and dried with hot air. **Black tea** is fermented for three hours, then dried and scented to strengthen the aroma and reduce bitterness. **Oolong tea** is a black tea but the leaves are semifermented for one hour.

Many studies scientifically support the health benefits of tea. For example, U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers recently reported that five cups of black tea a day can potentially lower LDL (the harmful cholesterol) as well as total cholesterol in people with mildly elevated cholesterol.

Do you have trouble falling asleep at night, staying asleep, or feeling like you've not slept at all when you wake up in the morning? Aside from issues such as illness, drugs, and inappropriate sleep environments (like falling asleep with the lights on while watching the Super Bowl), the main reason for sleep problems is stress. Green tea is a great destressor. You may not have to rev yourself up with copious amounts of caffeine in the morning if you drink green tea the night before.

So why is green tea such a great destressor? Green tea contains the amino acid L-theanine, which neutralizes the speedy, twitchy effects of caffeine without reducing its fat-burning, mind-enhancing effects. Volunteers working with researchers in Japan found that green tea didn't cause them to sleep longer, but it did cause them to sleep better.

Additionally, L-theanine can cross the blood-brain barrier and positively affect brain chemistry. It has been found to be a mood-enhancer by affecting serotonin (the feel-good chemical in the brain) and other neurotransmitters in the brain.

And for the "party people," green tea can help the liver recover. Research from Japan has shown that it is a powerful antidote to the effects of alcohol. Drinking alcohol (among other things) causes significant suppression of the liver's antioxidant and detoxifier known as glutathione. Theanine helps counteract this alcohol-induced loss of one of the body's major antioxidants.

Caffeine is effective for speeding up the body's metabolism, thereby assisting weight loss. Green tea promotes thermogenesis (the body's generation of heat) and complements the fat-burning aspect of caffeine. A study in the *Journal of Obesity* shows green tea increases thermogenesis by a huge 20 to 77 percent in laboratory animals! It regulates blood sugar and insulin and has a calming effect for dieters.

What about white tea? According to recent reports, white tea may be the most potent tea for cancer protection. One cup has the antioxidant capacity of 12 glasses of orange juice. White tea is rich in the compound EECG, which shows powerful activity in ridding the body of the dreaded and always no-good free radical scavengers.

TEA TIPS:

- To lessen the amount of caffeine in a cup of black tea, pour boiling water over the tea bag in one cup, leave for 60 seconds, and then place the bag into a second cup of hot water to steep for 2 to 3 more minutes. Up to 90 percent of the caffeine will be released into the first cup.
- To fully benefit from the health aspects of green and white teas, pour hot—not boiling—water over the leaves.
- Don't add milk to green tea—it not only clouds the nice, clear color, it also inhibits absorption of the protective compounds.
- The astringent polyphenols (sometimes erroneously known as tannin) found in teas can be an irritant to the intestinal linings and kidneys.
- Organic teas are a better option than nonorganic because you are guaranteed they have not been sprayed with pesticides.
- There are many types of herbal teas in today's market. Try chamomile tea for an upset stomach or to relax, peppermint as a digestive aid, dandelion to detoxify the liver, or ginger tea to relieve nausea.
- The British "afternoon tea time" is a wonderful way to relax from the day's stresses.

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"Knowing others is wisdom; knowing the self is enlightenment."

—Tao Te Ching

WEB SITE PICKS

www.snowcrystals.com

This site is all about snow crystals and snowflakes—what they are, where they come from, and just how these remarkably complex and beautiful structures are created, quite literally, out of thin air.

WORDS FOR REFLECTION

Stillness In Motion

Doing Things Slowly

Life can often feel like it's zipping by in fast forward. We feel obliged to accelerate our own speed along with it, until our productivity turns into frenzied accomplishment. We find ourselves cramming as much activity as possible into the shortest periods of time. We disregard our natural rhythms because it seems we have to just keep up. In truth, rushing never gets you anywhere but on to the next activity or goal.

Slowing down allows you to not only savor your experiences, but also it allows you to fully focus your attention and energy on the task at hand. Moving at a slower pace lets you get things done more efficiently, while rushing diminishes the quality of your work and your relationships. Slowing down also lets you be more mindful, deliberate, and fully present. When we slow down, we are giving ourselves the opportunity to reacquire ourselves with our natural rhythms. We let go of the "fast forward" stress and allow our bodies to remain centered and grounded. Slowing down is inherent to fully savoring anything in life. Rushing to take a bath can feel like an uncomfortable dunk in hot water, while taking a slow, hot bath can be luxuriant and relaxing. A student cramming for a test will often feel tired and unsure, whereas someone who really absorbs the information will be more confident and relaxed. Cooking, eating, reading, and writing can become pleasurable when done slowly. Slowing down lets you become more absorbed in whatever it is you are doing. The food you eat tastes better and the stories you read become more alive.

Slowing down allows you to disconnect from the frenzied pace buzzing around you so you can begin moving at your own pace. The moments we choose to live in

fast forward motion then become a conscious choice rather than an involuntary action. Learning to slow down in our fast-moving world can take practice but if you slow down long enough to try it, you may surprise yourself with how natural living at this pace can be.

(Source: www.dailyom.com)

TRAINING TIP

Understanding Style, Improving Communication

Our preferences for thinking and behaving combine to produce a personal style. Individual preferences are inborn and then developed by life experiences.

So, why is it important to understand them?

Developing self-awareness can free us to try new ways of being and doing; it allows us to accept others and ourselves more fully. Our communication with others can become more honest and effective as we gain a better understanding of others and ourselves.

To measure our own personal style, we can examine our personal preferences for four pairs of behavioral traits:

Introversion: Relates to others with caution; sets own direction from inner compass.

Extraversion: Relates freely to others; tries to conform to others' expectations.

Sensing: Likes facts, details, data; impatient with theorizing.

Intuiting: Impatient with details; likes concepts, ideas, theories.

Thinking: Is analytical, logical; prefers rules, procedures, systems.

Feeling: Believes feelings are superior to logic; feels confined by rules, procedures, systems.

Judging: Concentrates on a few facets of the problem; prefers a planned, orderly environment.

Perceiving: Considers all sides of an issue; is flexible, adaptable.



If we have over-developed one attitude or dimension to the virtual exclusion of its opposite, then we may find ourselves unbalanced. A look at what we can gain from those with different traits provides a motivation to develop versatility:

Extraverts need Introverts...

To help them discover how their own values can be important in meeting their own needs.

Introverts need Extraverts...

To help them consider how the larger world may interpret and value issues they are considering only from their own point of view.

Sensors need Intuitors...

To help them see the possibilities in situations.

Intuitors need Sensors...

To provide accurate recollection of the facts and details of situations.

Thinkers need Feelers...

To help them consider the value issues in their decisions.

Feelers need Thinkers...

To help them plan more logical, convincing arguments.

Judgers need Perceivers...

To help them slow down their decision-making so they consider as much relevant data as possible.

Perceivers need Judgers...

To help them set and keep deadlines so they will complete tasks.

(Source: *Personal Style Inventory* from HRDQ www.hrdq.com)

FINANCES

Tuition Tactics



If you have a youngster going to college, don't assume that you won't qualify for financial aid just because your family has ample income. A recent academic study found that 22 percent of families making \$100,000 a year or more were receiving financial aid. Your student might not qualify for aid from a lower-cost college but might qualify for aid from a more expensive—and perhaps more desirable—school.

The majority of financial aid comes in the form of loans, which will have to be repaid. However, the loans are often subsidized so the borrower doesn't have to pay interest or principal on the loan until after the student leaves school. In addition to loans, the student may receive financial aid via work-study programs, and many colleges (particularly private universities) provide grants or merit scholarships from endowment funds.

Even if your family doesn't qualify for aid one year, the next year some financial support might be available. The university's aid pool or criteria may have changed or your own circumstances may be different: you might have a second child entering college, which will boost your prospects for financial aid.

(Source: www.fedweek.com)

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Note from the Editor: Our sincere apologies to anyone who may have been offended by a section of the January *Work/Life Navigator* that was designed to bring some levity into the workplace. Offense was certainly not our intention. We will, in the future, assure that only appropriate material is provided for publication.

Questions/comments to:

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An online version of this newsletter may be found at http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codec/cc/Pages/navig_02_06.pdf.